



2019 Legislative Priorities Agenda

The Chapin Center for Public Policy of Long Island Cares determines the advocacy priorities for Long Island Cares, Inc.—The Harry Chapin Food Bank. We frequently support legislation designed to increase access to nutritious food for the diverse populations we serve through both our dedicated network of 390 member agencies and our own array of innovative direct service programs.

Realizing that hunger in America, and especially on Long Island, is an extremely complex multi-tiered societal issue, we also advocate for legislation which addresses and attempts to remedy the root causes of hunger, such as poverty and unemployment. As we are all too sadly aware, food insecurity is inextricably tied to income insecurity, and therefore, it is our duty to go on record supporting legislation that preserves access to critical social service programs and promotes vocational/job training services for the populations (veterans, seniors, and the homeless) benefitting from our services. Conversely, we oppose legislation which makes life tougher for the people we collaboratively serve by denying or lessening their critical services and benefits. In recent years, Long Island Cares, Inc. has evolved into a humanitarian organization utilizing nutrition services as a vehicle for economic empowerment to not only improve the quality of life for the agencies and clients we serve, but also to holistically uplift the region by improving the quality of life for all Long Islanders by providing for those among us currently struggling to make ends meet.

Our Top Priorities for 2019

Federal

Increased Support for Federal Nutrition Programs

- **Support the \$206 million increase (over the next 10 years) for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) food purchases contained in the recently passed Farm Bill.** Long Island Cares, Inc. administers this program on behalf of USDA in both Suffolk and Nassau Counties.
- **Support increased TEFAP Storage and Distribution funding for the nation's food banks.** While we appreciate that the Farm Bill fully funded TEFAP discretionary storage and distribution grants at \$100 million per year through FY2023, this funding level does not keep up with the increased product going to food banks as a direct result of recent USDA trade mitigation purchases.
- **Oppose structural changes to SNAP or cuts to SNAP funding;** consequently, we do not support the newly proposed USDA rule, which, if implemented, would cut 8.5 billion meals

from 755,000 Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) over the next 10 years by limiting states' ability to provide waivers.

Taxation & Tariffs

- **Support the full reinstatement of SALT deductions** as this will inequitably affect our region, making it harder for families struggling to make ends meet to stay afloat in such a high cost of living area.
- **Oppose any economic policy, such as Tariffs, which hurt America's diverse agricultural sector.** While the resulting trade mitigation purchases ultimately led to additional federal commodities for nation's food banks, we do not support any policy that initially hurts America's farmers.

Gun Violence

- **Support H.R. 8, the Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2019, which requires background checks on all firearm sales.** We applaud Representative Peter King for being the lead Republican sponsor of this bill, which takes proactive steps to keep guns away from people who should not have them, such as felons and domestic abusers. *As the Regional Food Bank for Long Island, we frequently conduct outreach, distribute emergency food, and host food drives at various governmental facilities, businesses, and schools. If enacted, this legislation helps keep our staff, volunteers, and clients safe.*

The Upcoming Census

- **Support an Island-wide campaign to ensure a fair and accurate 2020 Census Count on Long Island.** The federal government uses this data to determine its financial allocation to New York State. This directly affects both the government and nonprofit sectors' ability to provide critical health and human services. Perhaps most important, congressional representation is contingent upon these findings. *We stand with our colleagues, the Long Island Association and the Health & Welfare Council, in advocating for the resources needed to ensure a proper count.*

Public Charge & Immigration

- **Oppose the Department of Homeland Security's proposed Rule "Inadmissibility on Public Charge Grounds."** The Rule will generate confusion among immigrant families, government agencies, schools, social service providers, and advocates as to whether families could receive benefits without putting their own or a loved one's immigration status at risk. *If implemented, approximately 30,000 people, many of them children, would lose access to SNAP.*
- **Support the implementation of immigration policy that increases national security but also adheres to the humanitarian and egalitarian values upon which our nation stands.**

In this spirit, we advocate for the end of family separation and increased case management services both in border-states and throughout the nation as public administrators have the daunting bureaucratic task of aligning these children and their families with critical services.

Recognizing Our Founder, Harry Chapin

- **Support our founder, Harry Chapin, receiving the USPS Commemorative Stamp he deserves for his philanthropic and humanitarian work.**

State

Supporting Our Food Banks

- **Support increasing the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) budget by \$5 million.** We propose \$1 million of this increase go towards the creation of “seed grants” to incentivize food banks to develop new innovative programs to meet the unique need in their respective regions (i.e. mobile outreach units, community gardens, and nutrition education programs). The remaining \$4 million would afford the State’s food banks increased capacity to buy more locally grown produce from New York State farmers.
- **Support the New York State Office of General Services adjusting income guidelines for TEFAP eligibility to match that of neighboring Connecticut.** New York currently supports families at 185% of poverty and Connecticut provides TEFAP support to families with incomes at 200% of poverty. *This simple regulatory reform increases the ability of our food banks to meet the growing need among the “working poor” population who desperately need help but do not currently qualify for governmental assistance.*
- **Support the creation of school based pantries, run by the State’s regional food banks, to lessen children’s hunger amongst districts where 75% of students are eligible for free/reduced lunch.** This could be achieved by establishing on-site pantries at participating schools or by having the local food bank deploy mobile units in coordination with participating school districts. *Long Island Cares is currently operating mobile school pantries in both Brentwood and Riverhead.*

Fighting Homelessness

- **Support funding and authorization for Home Stability Support (HSS) in the State Budget.** The number of homeless individuals and families in New York continues to increase and the rent portion of public assistance does not address rising housing costs. HSS aims to create a statewide rent supplement designed to address the gap between the present shelter allowance and 85% of the fair market rent for those facing homelessness or living in dangerous housing conditions. *We stand with our colleagues, the Empire Justice Foundation and the Suffolk County Welfare to Work Commission, in advocating for the resources needed to end homelessness in New York.*

Making New York More Affordable

- **Support making the New York State property tax cap permanent, and a 2% cap on state spending growth** in light of the loss of federal income tax deductions for state and local taxes (“SALT”). *We stand with our colleagues at the Long Island Association in advocating for property tax relief in such a high cost of living area.*

Increased Support for Veterans

- **Support Senator Brooks’ proposal to establish a veterans home in Nassau County similar to the Long Island State Veterans Home located at SUNY Stony Brook.** This one-stop shop would provide residential care for disabled veterans and offer a full range of outpatient and day programs, such as a food pantry, case management, and employment training services. *It would also share space with common stakeholders so that veterans can have all their concerns addressed in one central location.*
- **Support increased funding to support case management services in the upcoming budget.** Many of the veterans we provide with emergency food and household supplies possess other pressing needs, such as housing or chronic health conditions. *We hope to better align our veterans with critical services and have the resources needed to coordinate and follow up.*

Increased Support for Farmers

- **Support expansion of the Farm Workforce Retention Tax Credit,** which helps farmers offset higher costs associated with the minimum wage increase that took effect at the start of the year. Additionally, we support the State in developing new tax relief programs or simply broadening exemptions to help farmers negatively impacted by recent federal trade policies.

Increased Support for Nonprofit Infrastructure

- **Support increased funding for necessary capital improvements,** such as solar, HVAC systems, and various energy saving devices, which will make these nonprofits more efficient, affordable, and sustainable. This incentive ensures that more money will go towards supporting the organization’s programs and services. It is critical that this funding is also available to nonprofits that currently own their facility.

Suffolk & Nassau Counties

Development Initiatives

- **Support the redevelopment of the Nassau Hub** because this immense development project addresses under/unemployment by creating good paying jobs for MWBEs and veterans. Furthermore, it aims to address the “brain drain” by providing affordable housing designed to meet the changing needs and preferences of the region’s emerging millennial population.

- **Support the redevelopment of Belmont Park and the permanent return of the New York Islanders to Nassau County.** This immense development project will strengthen our regional economy, drive tourism, and stimulate local businesses.

Plastic Bags

- Last year, Suffolk County enacted a law requiring any store providing disposable bags to charge a 5-cent fee per bag. The intent of this legislation is to reduce the environmental impacts associated with single use bags. However, all money collected goes directly to the stores, and the stores are currently making a 3-cent profit per bag. While we realize that Suffolk County requires State approval to collect this money, **we encourage the Suffolk County Legislature to petition the State to create a dedicated fund to reinvest this money towards environmental programs and initiatives based here in Suffolk County.**

About Long Island Cares

Long Island Cares, Inc.—The Harry Chapin Food Bank is Long Island’s first food bank and the region’s most comprehensive hunger action organization. Founded in 1980 by the late singer, songwriter and social activist, Harry Chapin, the mission of Long Island Cares is to bring together all available resources for the benefit of the hungry on Long Island and to provide to the best of our ability for the humanitarian needs of our community. Our goals are to provide emergency food where and when it is needed, sponsor a wide variety of innovative direct service programs that help families achieve self-sufficiency, and educate the general public about the causes and consequences on Long Island. Today, Long Island Cares is led by Harry Chapin’s wife and partner Sandy Chapin, a dedicated Board of Directors, and talented staff working out of their 35,000 sq. ft. facility in Hauppauge and three storefront service centers in Freeport, Lindenhurst, and Huntington Station. The organization provides nutritional food and support services for a network of more than 390 community-based member agencies including food pantries, soup kitchens, emergency shelters, childcare programs, senior nutrition sites, disability organizations, veterans’ services and more. While the annual distribution of greater than 7 million pounds of nutritional food is at the heart of Long Island Cares’ operations, we also provide a broad array of programs and services including hunger education, supplemental food programs for children, job development, legislative advocacy, and on-site triage food pantries.

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